

**Bureau of Land Management
Central California Resource Advisory Council (RAC)
May 9 – 11, 2013
Visalia, CA**

Off-Highway Vehicle (OHV) Subgroup May 9

ATTENDEES

RAC: Steve Koretoff (chair), Roger Mitchell, George Armstrong

BLM: Este Stifel, Ruben Leal, David Christy, Gabe Garcia, Bill Haigh, Steve Nelson, Rick Cooper

Public: Barbara Christy

Existing OHV Areas/Potential Areas

Rick Cooper, Hollister Field Manager, said there are about 25 miles of ATV/UTV trail and a campground in the Condon Peak area outside the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern. There are no trails in the Cantua area now, but the proposed Clear Creek Management Area (CCMA) Resource Management Plan calls for 25-30 miles of trail there. There is a small area with designated trails on Williams Hills and potential for more if a public agency could acquire some scattered lands for access.

MOTION PASSED: The OHV Subgroup should work with the Hollister Field Office to identify OHV opportunities in Clear Creek Management Area outside the Serpentine Area of Critical Environmental Concern.

Gabe Garcia, Bakersfield Field Office manager, said the draft RMP would close high density oilfields to OHV access. Under the RMP there would be OHV opportunities at Keyesville and the east side of the Temblors. Steve Koretoff said he had ridden the Temblors and a good trail map and signage will be important there.

Bill Haigh, Mother Lode Field Office manager, said the office has a scattered land pattern. That, combined with opposition from residents, makes finding an OHV area challenging. The best option would be to combine private and public lands for an area operated by the State Parks OHV Division. Este Stifel, Central California District manager, asked what kinds of OHV use might be suitable and how large a parcel would be required.

MOTION PASSED: The OHV Subgroup should work with the Mother Lode Field Office to identify potential areas – focusing on areas of 50-200 acres - for OHV use. The review should include the type of OHV use that might take place and areas where BLM parcels might be combined with land owned by other parties to develop an OHV area managed by the State Parks OHV Division.

Steve Nelson, acting Bishop Field Office manager, said there is a 1,000-acre open area at Poleta Canyon and two closed areas – the Inyo and Granite Mountain wilderness areas. BLM also is cooperating with other agencies on a trial program for OHV touring.

Subgroup members and staff discussed if the subgroup should be continued and what role it would play.

MOTION PASSED: Establish the OHV Subgroup as a Standing Subgroup.

- Look for additional OHV opportunities
- Help the agency preserve and protect OHV opportunities.

RAC ORIENTATION

ATTENDEES:

RAC: George Armstrong, Jim Keller, Mary Gorden, Emmy Cattani, Carl Twisselman, Steve Koretoff, Roger Mitchell, Sally Miller.

BLM: Este Stifel, Ruben Leal, David Christy, Gabe Garcia, Bill Haigh, Steve Nelson, Rick Cooper

Public: Barbara Christy, Martha Twisselman

BLM staff presented information on underlying legislation and the role of the RAC

RAC MEETING

May 10 – Meeting in the morning, Case Mountain tour in the afternoon.

ATTENDEES

RAC: George Armstrong, Jim Keller, Mary Gorden, Emmy Cattani, Carl Twisselman, Steve Koretoff (chair), Roger Mitchell, Sally Miller, Reb Monaco, Blair Knox

BLM: Este Stifel, Ruben Leal, David Christy, Gabe Garcia, Bill Haigh, Steve Nelson, Rick Cooper, Steve Larson

Public: Barbara Christy, Allen Ishida

Officers

Reb Monaco was elected RAC chair and Sally Miller vice chair.

Motions

The full RAC approved motions passed by the OHV Subgroup.

Future agenda items

The RAC discussed future topics for discussion and passed motions on topics for next meetings. Due to limited budgets, additional meetings this year will be by videoconference. Meetings were tentatively scheduled for August and October. Motions are:

- Request that BLM work with Conservation Lands Foundation to give a public workshop on the National Conservation Lands at a CCRAC meeting within the next 6 months. (Sally Miller and Mary Gorden to help organize)
 - As part of the workshop, request that BLM give a detailed progress report on how the 5-year strategic plan is being implemented at the statewide level and at the CCRAC level, including specifically how the strategic plan is being incorporated into the RMPs that cover central CA.

- Request that BLM work with the CCRAC to implement the strategic plan in the region. For example, CCRAC members can help foster collaborative relationships with “Friends” groups that will work with BLM to help implement the plan (e.g., stewardship, public education).
- As part of the workshop, discuss planning for the Wilderness Act 50th Anniversary.
- Request that BLM hold a video teleconference meeting on renewable energy for the CC RAC. (Sally Miller and Emmy Cattani to help organize)

Field Office Reports

Bishop

Steve Nelson said there should be a decision by the Fish and Wildlife Service on whether to include sage grouse on the list of Threatened and Endangered species.

Bishop has ongoing litigation with Western Watersheds over grazing. An RMP amendment would eliminate sheep grazing on two allotments.

The local air quality district says dust from Keeler dunes is impacting air quality.

Ownership of the area is 75 percent BLM, 25 percent Los Angeles Department of Water and Power. The area contains archaeological sites that need to be protected.

A final Environmental Impact Statement for the Casa Diablo IV geothermal project should be out in June.

Bishop has a small area included in the Desert Renewable Energy Conservation Plan.

Bishop hasn't heard anything from the firm looking at mining for gold in the Bodie Hills.

Mother Lode

Bill Haigh said the management plan for Kanaka Valley has been completed and one appeal will go to the Interior Board of Land Appeals.

BLM is part of an interagency group looking at forest health on 700,000 acres of the Mokelumne River watershed. The work would be funded by utilities that use the river. The most cost-effective projects were seen on the lower elevations where BLM manages land, so BLM may get some funding.

The Cosumnes River Preserve is planning the \$2.5 million Cougar Wetlands restoration project. The preserve has been awarded \$4 million in grants in the last eight months.

Mother Lode currently gets \$40,000 from hydropower relicensing on the Mokelumne, but will see that grow by \$333,000 from the South Fork American and \$120,000 from other rivers.

Carl Twisselman asked about the status of fuels projects in the wildland-urban interface, the topic of a previous RAC meeting. Bill Haigh said Mother Lode works with fire safe councils and has a variance program to allow adjacent landowners to do work on BLM land with BLM approval. BLM has been using crews from organizations like AmeriCorps and the California Conservation Corps to get projects done at lower cost. Mother Lode staff have coordinated work to streamline the environmental review process for projects.

Hollister

Rick Cooper noted the Fort Ord National Monument dedication ceremony was held on the same date as the RAC meeting last year. BLM has found ordnance on some property transferred from the Army and may need to use controlled burns for vegetation management in those areas.

A new access point to Fort Ord is open along Highway 68. BLM expects to see 150,000 user days at Fort Ord this year,

BLM is working on some final details to get Coast Dairies transferred to BLM. Santa Cruz Regional Transit purchased the railway leading to the Cemex plant. The railway could be used for a visitor train or converted to a trail.

BLM hopes to have a Record of Decision for the Clear Creek Management Area Resource Management Plan by the end of the fiscal year. The plan includes adaptive management to manage risk from naturally occurring asbestos. Risk levels used in the plan were established in legislation based on toxicity values.

A Resource Management Plan amendment is being prepared for the Panoche area toured by the RAC at the last meeting.

There are two court cases in progress on oil and gas leases in the Hollister Field Office auctioned in December 2011 and 2012. The Plaintiffs contend BLM needed to consider fracking at the leasing stage, the reasonable and foreseeable analysis used was inadequate.

Steve Koretoff said there is concern by OHV users and rockhounds the risk analysis used at Clear Creek was inadequate. The Environmental Protection Agency criteria were based on industrial exposure that would give an inaccurate risk level at Clear Creek. He encouraged BLM to look at that issue as part of adaptive management.

Bakersfield

Gabe Garcia said Element Energy is looking building at a 24-MW solar plant on 1,500 acres at Atwell Island. The site presently does not have a transmission line.

BLM is waiting on a Biological Opinion from the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the Bakersfield RMP and hopes to have a Record of Decision this fall.

The RMP would designate the Temblors as a Special Recreation Management Area. Blair Knox said the oil and gas industry is concerned about liability from OHV use in the oilfields in that area, so favors the SRMA.

The University of California at Merced has expressed interest in establishing a research station at Atwell Island, but not agreement has been reached.

In the last 15 months, BLM has collected \$20,000 in user fees at the San Joaquin River Gorge. Money raised has been used to expand hours at the visitors' center, install a vault toilet, improve parking and increase access for fishing and equestrian use. There has been about a 60-percent compliance rate when the gorge is staffed.

For the oil and gas program, BLM has received 150 Applications for Permit to Drill, an average number. There have been 2,000 Sundry Notices filed for the year to date, significantly more than the usual annual average of 2,500. BLM has done 434 Inspection and Enforcement inspections for the year to date, half the annual target.

Blair Knox asked where lease revenues go. Gabe Garcia said half the amount goes to the U.S. Treasury and half goes to the state. Blair Knox said leases make money, so it makes

no financial sense to cut them. The Bakersfield metropolitan area has the fastest growing economy in the United States based on oil and gas.

Gabe Garcia said the first draft of national fracking rules received 177,000 public comments and a second draft will be issued for public comment soon.

Emmy Cattani asked about renewing grazing leases as a priority. Gabe Garcia said that budget wasn't cut and BLM is working through the grazing leases.

May 11

ATTENDEES

RAC: George Armstrong, Jim Keller, Mary Gorden, Emmy Cattani, Carl Twisselman, Steve Koretoff (chair), Roger Mitchell, Sally Miller, Reb Monaco, Blair Knox

BLM: Este Stifel, Ruben Leal, David Christy, Gabe Garcia, Bill Haigh, Steve Nelson, Rick Cooper, Steve Larson

Public: Barbara Christy, Jill Monaco, Martha Twisselman

San Clemente Dam

Rick Cooper said Cal America is removing the dam on the Carmel River. The river will be rerouted around the 978-acre dam site to avoid the need to remove fill. The project will allow a trail to be completed from the Ventana Wilderness to the coast. It should break ground this summer.

Public Comment

No public comments

Three Rivers Area

Mary Gorden said there have not been problems along the North Fork Kaweah River since the area was closed by BLM. Residents near Case Mountain use the area daily for mountain biking and equestrian use. There is significant public interest in BLM potentially acquiring additional acreage there. Steve Larson said BLM would consider reopening the Kaweah area if there is adequate funding for law enforcement.

Land acquisition

Rick Cooper said Hollister has acquired 6,500 acres in the Panoche area since 2007.

BLM is working with ranchers to acquire either fee title or conservation easements in the area for habitat and was awarded \$3.6 million in Central Valley Project Improvement Act funds. The value of land in the area has increased from \$400 per acre to \$600.

Future RAC topics

The BLM lands program – where the money comes from, how BLM decides which parcels to acquire, how BLM works with counties on property tax issues – was identified as a topic for a future meeting.

Managers reported the number of Wilderness areas and Wilderness Study Areas for their field offices:

Bakersfield – 7 Wilderness areas, 11 WSAs

Hollister – Hollister Field Office has a 736 acre Ventana Wilderness Area Additions Wilderness Area located in the Black Rock Ridge Area of Monterey County.

Panoche Hills North WSA and Panoche Hills South WSA located in Fresno County.

Bear Mountain WSA located in Monterey County adjacent to Los Padres National Forest.

Bear Canyon Rare II Contiguous WSA in Monterey County adjacent to Ventana Wilderness.

San Benito Mountain WSA (1500 acre) located in the Clear Creek Management Area San Benito County.

Bishop – Two Wilderness areas with 200,000 acres, 14 WSAs with 160,000 acres.

Mother Lode – No Wilderness areas, one WSA by the Merced River.